DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 219 109 JC 820 364

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TITLE Cultural Vignette: Mexican Americans.

INSTITUTION San Diego Community Coll. District, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY California Community Colleges, Sacramento. Office of the Chancellor.
PUB DATE [81]
NOTE 57p.; Developed under a grant from the California Community College Fund for the Improvement of Instruction. For related documents, see ED 217 903 and JC 820 362-363.
AVAILABLE FROM Multicultural East San Diego Adult Center, 5348 University Avenue, San Diego, CA 92105 ($9.00 for the complete Ethnic Heritage Search Kit).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Clothing; Family Role; Food; Handicrafts; *Hispanic American Culture; Mexican American History; Mexican American Literature; *Mexican Americans; Spanish

ABSTRACT

Developed as part of a multicultural research project in the San Diego Community College District, this booklet presents the findings of a 10-member research team about various elements of Mexican-American culture. The areas covered are: (1) historical background on the Mexican heritage of the United States from pre-colonial times to the present and the political, cultural, and linguistic changes wrought during the centuries; (2) family traditions which emphasize the dominant position of the father and parent-child relationships; (3) the most popular types of Mexican food, their origins, modes of preparation, and popular recipes; (4) different styles of dress worn in Mexico and Central America, their history among the indigenous people of the region, and how they are made; (5) the arts of weaving and embroidery and their development, and the significance of geometric symbols, animals, and plants represented in embroidery; and (6) the linguistic tradition of Mexican-Americans and variations in language usage. The booklet contains diagrams of different forms of dress and various methods by which they are assembled. Annotated bibliographies are provided on Mexican oral literature, Chicano literature, Mexican and Mexican-American history, and the Mexican family. Additional bibliographies list sources on Mexican cooking and clothing. Finally, a list of resource people is provided. (HB)

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CULTURAL VIGNETTE - MEXICAN AMERICANS

San Diego Community College District Adult and Continuing Education

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This booklet was developed as a part of "An Interdisciplinary Approach to Multicultural Education" (IAME), a California Community College Innovative Program, 1980-1981 Fund for the Improvement of Instruction

JC 820 364

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PREFACE*

Ladies, Gentlemen, Students:

I extend a cordial welcome to this first celebration of the Cultural Awareness Fair.

The theme, "Cultural Awareness Fair", refers to the fact that the country we live in is considered a nation built on the strength and participation of immigrants and human groups coming from all over the world. Most have been immigrants. Some involuntarily transferred here within the economics of past eras - human beings, inhabitants in new lands, with hope of achieving a better life in an environment offering opportunity and freedom to direct their efforts in the pursuit of an ideal. Each group coming from a different world-region has brought a wealth of enrichment - work energies, special skills, art, hope, and philosophy. This has created a brilliant mosaic of cultural fragments that have created the dazzling social structure that characterizes the United States. We are all contributors and, at the same time, we are all recipients of a cultural richness unique in the history of the world.

And so, we are different, and at the same time, we are one, a unified nation that now has the opportunity and challenge to show the world that the stream of diverse cultural currents has created a grand multicultural ocean: fascinating, strong and invicible. And these are the dimensions of a multicultural society.

*Mexican keynote speech on Cultural Awareness Fair theme: "We are Different, Yet We are One: Dimensions for a Multicultural Society", delivered May 30, 1981, by Stella Leal Kellogg, Dean of the San Diego Community College District Harbor View Adult Center.

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MARCIA REED graduated from the University of Minnesota with a major in art and minors in library science and home economics. In St. Paul she restored and resided in a 25 room mansion, and restored and managed a 17 unit apartment building both built in the 1880's. Also, she sponsored a seasonal boutique in her home with 50 other artists and crafts persons. As a creative clothing and stitchery teacher, Marcia emphasizes ethnic techniques, and has written a recycling curriculum. The mother of a teenager and wife of an advertizing agent and author, she has made folkwear garments for Golden State Fabric displays, sold hundreds of custom-made garments and has published both garment designs and techniques in Ethnic Costumes by Ericson and Ericson. Her hobbies include swimming, reading, gardening, and general creating.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

More than six million people of Mexican origin or descent inhabit the United States, making Mexican-Americans the second largest minority group in the country. The vast majority of these people (more than 85%) live in the five southwestern states close to the Mexican border: California, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado.

Prior to 1821, a Mexican was usually a person who spoke the Mexican and Aztec language, called "Nahuatl." The early Spaniards almost always referred to the Aztec people as Mexicans. This practice has continued in modern Mexico where the Nahuatl language is called "Mexicano" by the common people.

The Mexican heritage of the United States commenced long before the inception of the country as a union of states. About 4000 B.C. Indians lived in southern New Mexico. Their way of life was largely based upon Mexican influences in architecture, pottery-making, clothing, religion, and government. In about 1000 A.D. there was a move from northern Mexico into what is now southern Arizona. 1

In the 1520's the Spaniards began their conquest of Mexico. However, the Spanish invasion did not bring an end to the vitality of the Mexican culture since the people still maintained their churches, recorded history, and craftmanship.

The Spanish intermarried with the Indians, contributing to the mixture of the Spanish and native Mexican races. Gradually the way of life brought to American by the Europeans became mixed with native Mexican influences, until the life of the common people became a blend of Spanish-Arabic and Indians traits. This process of mixture made possible the creation of the independent Mexican republic in 1821, after a 10-year struggle for freedom.

The Mexican War from 1846 to 1848, while provoked by the annexation of Texas by the United States in 1845, was in part the culmination of 25 or 30 years of rising cultural conflict. Loss of Texas by Mexico was realized in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Americans out-numbered the Texas-Mexicans

six to one). The prevalent attitude then was one of Anglo supremacy. This was a period of birth (or reaffirmation) of the stereotype that Mexican-Americans, as a cultured people, were inferior. Since they were subordinate, they were readily exploited, and it is not surprising to find that signs of withdrawal, defeatism and fatalism developed among them at that time.

The Mexican War did not immediately alter the character of the Southwest, except in eastern Texas and nothern California. Southern California remained a Spanish-speaking region until the 1870's with Spanish-language and bi-lingual schools, Spanish-language newspapers, and Spanish-speaking judges and community leaders. California and other Southwestern regions remained as bi-lingual states until about the 1880's.

Gradually, however, Anglo-Americans from the east, who were not sympathetic with the Mexican culture, began to dominate the Southwest. Thus began a transformation to more "English" orientations, causing the Mexican-American to be a forgotten citizen.

By the 1890's tourists and writers began to rediscover the "Spanish" heritage. A "Spanish" cultural revival was thus initiated, influencing in particular architectural styles which have typified much of the Southwest ever since. 2

The social balance between the Mexican-American and Anglo-American was altered by the Mexican Revolution of 1910, and by the First World War. This period marked the advent of mass immigrations from Mexico to the United States. Those who came were generally the poor and unskilled. Many were recruited by American employers and hired for farming, mining, and building railroads.

During World War II, the United States used the "bracero" program to recruit Mexican laborers. This program provided a controlled pool of temporary labor. After the war, however, American employers continued the program, and the number of Mexican nationals in the United Stetes increased dramatically. Alarmed, the governments of the various Southwestern states attempted to get rid of the surplus of Mexican-American labor.

World War II marked a turning point in the lives of many Mexican-Americans. Many opportunities that were previously closed became suddenly accessible. Military service provided some with their first contact with Anglos in other than a subservient basis. Exposure to other countries and cultures diminished some of their own ethnocentrism. They became more politically conscious.

During the War, new vocational and educational opportunities became available for Mexican-Americans. Those at home benefitted from occupational openings created by the labor shortages of a country at war.

The Mid 1960's saw the birth of the "Chicano generation," a group of militantly active Mexican-Americans who are no longer willing to wait patiently for their rights which they believe are guaranteed to them by the Constitution of the country they have come to call home. This movement has created a new pride among Mexican-Americans about their heritage. The feeling may prove ultimately to be a factor in preserving some of the traditional patterns of the Mexican-American family.

FAMILY ROLES

The traditional Mexican American family is large, comprised of many children, and often one or more grandparent.

At the head of the family is the father. He is judged by the way he provides for his family, although his decisions are not considered subjects for criticism by the rest of the family. He demands obedience from his wife, makes the financial decisions, and represents the household to the world.

This male role is based on the idea of "machismo," a Spanish word meaning totally masculine. To qualify as "macho," a man should be disinterested in anything considered feminine, such as elegance, beauty, and sentimentality. Instead he attempts to take a hard attitude

toward life, demonstrating great physical and sexual prowess. To develop these qualities, small boys are forbidden to cry, and adolescent boys are encouraged to talk about sex.

In the past few years, the demand for being "macho" has diminished somewhat in the Mexican American culture, but those who are still influenced by the idea suffer great frustration due to the almost inhuman, unrealistic demands it puts on a man's natural personality. Alcoholism is high among men who strive to be "macho."

Marriage is very important to a Mexican American woman because it is through that condition that she gains social position. Once married, she is expected to run the home, raise the children, and to dedicate herself to the welfare of her husband.

In the same sense that a "good" male is considered "macho," a "good" female is "hembrisma," which means the heart of the home. In the male ideal, she is a pure, sexless creature, elevated to a pedestal and equated with the Virgin Mary. 4

While being subservient to her husband, the Mexican American mother is expected to be an authoritarian figure to her children. This dominance is often extended to the grown sons who will dominate their own wives, but still be obedient and adoring toward their mother.

Although the use of birth control is increasing, there is still a great pride in having many children. They are seen as an extension of the parents, a gift to society, an insurance against loneliness, and the guarantee of someone to take care of the parents in their old age.

A new born child is a cause for great celebrating. The infant will be handled and cuddled a great deal. Once the next child is born, however, the attention is directed toward the new infant.

In bringing up children, peace and harmony, cooperation, and compliance are emphasized. Girls, especially, are taught "peacemaking," and boys are not allowed to hit their sisters.

Children are also taught not to question the authority of adults.

To show respect, they are encouraged to address older adults as "aunt" or "uncle."

There are subtle differences between the father's relationship with his sons and daughters. Fathers tend to be distant from their sons, and sometimes very severe in an effort to instill the sense of "macho." Fathers will play a little with their young sons, but as the boys grow older, they tend not to share common interests and activities. Rather the boy's peer group becomes very important in his life.

In contrast, fathers are often very possessive and protective of their daughters. A daughter will be "daddy's girl," and there is sometimes jealousy in a father over a girl's suitors.

Mother-daughter relationships are usually very close, continuing throughout their lives. Mother-son relationships are also very close, but rarely is there the sense of affinity that mothers and daughters share.

FOOD

Modern Mexican cuisine is based on the foods of the ancient Aztecs and Mayans. The Spanish explorers introduced their foods and customs so that now Mexican food is a unique blend of the cooking worlds of the Aztecs, Spanish, and to a lesser degree, the French.

The Aztecs enjoyed some foods unknown to the world outside America before Cortes. Among those were chocolate, vanilla, corn, chiles, peanuts, tomatoes, avocados, squash, beans, sweet potatoes, pineapples, and papayas. In exchange, they were introduced to hitherto unknown Spanish foods such as oil, wine, cinnamon, cloves, rice, wheat, peaches, apricots, and cattle for beef, butter, and milk. The Spanish also introduced frying as a cooking method. Under the reign of Maximilian and Carlotta, from 1864 to 1967, French, Austrian, and Italian dishes were also introduced to Mexico.

Corn, chiles, tomatoes, and beans are used as staples in Mexican food, with corn serving wheat's role as the staff of life. In fact, corn was venerated by the Aztecs and Mayas, and they had deities of corn.

There are a variety of ways the corn is prepared to eat. One is to grind the whole kernels with a stone mortar and pestle into a meal. The meal is then mixed with water to make a gruel called "atole."

A more useful preparation is to heat the corn in a mildly corrosive solution of lime until the skins come off. The skinned kernels, called by their Aztec name "nixtamal," are then boiled fresh until the kernels swell. That creates a dish called "pozole."

Another use for the nixtamal is to mash it into masa, a dough used to make tortillas. Traditionally the woman squats on the ground in front of a stone slab known as a "metate." She puts a few handfuls at a time of the nextamal on the slab, and then scrubs it back and forth with a stone roller. When the dough is the right consistency, it is patted into round, flat, pancake-like pieces known as "tortillas."

The nixtamal is also used to make tamales, a corn dish steamed in corn husks.

A combination of beans and corn is a complete protein, making the Mexican diet very healthy. Beans are normally prepared in one of two ways. The first is to simmer them in an earthen ware pot and then season them with chili and herbs. They are then served "de olla" (out of the pot). The second manner of preparation is to take the simmered beans and fry them and mash them, making a dish called "frijoles refritos" or refried beans. 6

Chiles are an essential seasoning in any Mexican dish. There are 61 classified varieties, ranging from sweet to pungent to hot. They are divided into two groups: the red which are used dried and the green which are used fresh.

Herbs and spices are also important to Mexican cooking. Those most frequently used are anise, allspice, bay leaves, cinnamon, cloves, cumin, coriander seeds, marjoram, oregano, sesame, saffron, mint, and cilantro. Others, less known in the United States, are wormseed (also known as pigweed or goosefoot) and annato or annatta.

From these ingredients Mexicans make a wide variety of dishes. The most well known, and perhaps classic among them are the following:

Taco: anything rolled in a tortilla. It is the Mexican equivalent to a sandwich.

Enchilada: a tortilla dipped in a thick sauce, usually green or tomato, then fried rapidly. It is then rolled like a taco with a filling such as pork, chicken, cheese, or crab. The remaining sauce is poured over the top.

Tamales: any filling is surrounded with the corn dough and then wrapped in corn husks and steamed.

Tostadas: a tortilla is deep fried until golden brown and stiff, and then heaped with beans, meat, vegetables, cheese, and sauce.

Quesadilla: a tortilla is filled with meat, sauce, beans, cheese, or vegetables, folded like a turnover, and then fried until crisp.

These dished, in the old days, were cooked in decorated earthenware casseroles ("cazuelas") and pots ("ollas") of different shapes and 7
sizes. Today in Mexico cooks also use aluminum, enamelled iron, and stainless steel pots and pans.

A typical day for a Mexican begins at 5:00 a.m. with breakfast ("desayuno") which consists usually of a selection of sweet breads and cafe con leche (milk coffee) or sometimes hot chocolate. At 9:00 a.m. people sit down for "almuerzo," a heartier breakfast of fruit or fruit juice, huevos rancheros (country style eggs), beans, chile sauce, tortillas, and cafe con leche. In the city, almuerzo will be eaten closer to our luncheon hour, about 11:00 or 11:30 a.m.

The main meal, "comida," is eaten anywhere from 2:00 to 5:30 p.m. It is a heavy meal, usually beginning with a light soup such as consumme. Then follows "sopa seca," or dry soup, a sort of casserole often layered with tortillas and other ingredients such as chorzo, onions, and tomatoes. A main course of meat or fish will be followed by a simple green salad or vegetable and beans.

Very few people in Mexico dine at night. "Ceda," or dinner, is saved for very special occasions and because of the Spanish influence, won't be eaten until very late at night, around 11 o'clock or midnight. Some children are served a "merienda," which is like an English high tea at 6:00 ot 7:00 at night. That normally consists of a light meal of cocoa, atole (the corn gruel), sweet breads, jam, and perhaps a little ham.

RECIPES

FLOUR TORTILLAS

INGREDIENTS

2 cups flour
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. baking powder
1-1/4 Tbs. shortening
3/4 cup warm water

METHOD

1. Turn griddle to "Hot"
2. Mix dry ingredients
3. Cut in shortening until flour has "corn meal" feel
4. Make well and pour water
5. Mix thoroughly until oil dry flour disappears
6. Knead until dough is completely smooth
7. Shape into 12 to 14 balls
8. Pat flat and allow to rest a few minutes
9. Roll out and cook on Ungreased griddle turning several times
10. Place in foil to keep warn and store in plastic bags

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CORN TORTILLAS

INGREDIENTS

2 cups Mesa Harina
1 cup warm water

METHOD

1. Mix Mesa Harina and water
2. Shape ball ONE AT A TIME
3. Place on tortilla, press between plastic wrap
4. Cook on hot griddle (UNGREASED)

RAJAS CON QUESO

INGREDIENTS

6 large pablana, if possible. If not, California or Bell peppers will do
2 tbsp. margarine
2 medium onions
1/4 to 1/2 cup chicken stock
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 to 3/4 cup Monterey Jack or cream cheese
1/4 cup sour cream

METHOD

1. Prepare the chiles as learned
2. Cut into strips or rajas
3. Wilt onions in margarine
4. Add rajas and heat thoroughly
5. Add chicken stock and sour cream

This may be used as a vegetable or mixed with chicken for soup filling.

SALSA DE JITOMATE

INGREDIENTS

1/2 small onion or 3 fresh green onions
1 clove garlic, minced
1 cup water
pinch of dried chili peppers (Red) (if desired)
1 tbsp. butter
1 med. can tomato sauce
1/4 tsp. ea., salt & oregano

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METHOD

Saute onion and garlic in butter. Add tomato sauce, water and spices. Simmer gently 3 to 5 minutes.

THIS SALSO MAY BE SERVED OVER ANY GREEN VEGETABLE.

SALSA DE CHILE VERDE

INGREDIENTS

3 to 4 long green chiles (Calif.)
3 to 4 tomatoes
Salt & Pepper
1 med. onion or 3 green onions
2 cloves garlic
Cilantro

METHOD

Toast the chiles and tomatoes, remove from fire, cool and then pool. Discard seeds. Mince onion and garlic. Add chiles and tomatoes that have been mashed or chopped. Add finely chopped cilantro. If mixture is too thick, water may be added or a little vinegar.

GUACAMOLE

INGREDIENTS

Ripe avocadoes and salsa

METHOD

Mash avocadoes until lumpy and add salsa. Lemon juice may be added. Sour cream is also added to stretch the amount.

MEXICAN PINTO BEANS

INGREDIENTS

1 pound pinto beans
1 onion
3 cloves garlic
1 California Pepper
1 tomato
6 cup water
Salt to taste

METHOD

Wash beans thoroughly and remove any rocks.
Add above ingredients EXCEPT SALT and gently boil 3-4 hrs.
When beans are soft and skins separate, add salt

REFRIED BEANS

METHOD

Heat 1/2 cup bacon drippings in frying pan until hot.
Carefully add boiled beans.
Mash thoroughly and cook until liquid is absorbed.
Add 1/4 to 1/3 lb. grated Jack or American cheese.
These beans may be refried again and again. They then take on a crispy texture and taste. They are then reffered to as Frijoles Chinitos.

BEAN TOSTADA

METHOD

Fry a corn tortilla in oil until slightly crisp. Drain on paper toweling. Cover tortilla with refried beans. Sprinkle grated cheese on beans. Add salsa. Top with shredded lettuce, garnishes of scur cream, olives, radishes, etc.

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DRESS

Bright colors, elaborate weaving techniques, and beautiful embroidery are just some of the qualities that characterize the Indian costumes of Mexico. Skillfully made and often adaptable for many uses, the men's and women's garments, belts, headdresses, servilletias (tortilla cloths) and bags can be still found in infinite variety throughout Mexico.

Although the garments made before the Spanish arrival to the country in the 16th century were simply made from straight lengths of cloth and taken directly off the loom rather than cut and tailored, they were highly decorated. They were woven with designs, embroidered, stamped, and dyed. Feathers were also used as adornment on cloth, and probably also for warmth. There were many vegetable and insect dyes used, some of which are still employed today.

In ancient Mexico,costume differences not only set the rich or privileged apart from the poor, they also testified to the wearer's tribe and place of origin. Common people could wear cotton only under the pain of death. Instead, they wore maguey fiber, known as "ixtle," which was obtained from the spiky 11
leaves of the manguey cactus. When spun and woven, it gives a cloth with an open, netlike appearance. Aztec women liked to decorate it with embroidery, using needles of copper, bone, or the thorns of the manguey.

The principle garments worn by pre-Columbian men consisted of the "ayatl" (mantle) and the "maxtlatl" (loin cloth). The nobelman's mantle was woven of cotton, whereas the commoner's mantle was made of ixtle.

The ayatl was a four foot sqare of cloth worn as a cape or knotted over on shoulder and open on the side. They would sometimes be woven with rabbit fur or completely covered with feathers to make designs. Other decorations included shells, mother-of-pearl, and jade. Although the garment itself was simple, the decorations on those worn by the nobility and warrior classes were sumptuous.

A nobleman's loin cloth was also decorated, and he would wear a tall headdress made of wood, feathers, fibers, leather, and bark paper. To complete his outfit, his sandles would be elaboratley embroidered and in the

case of rulers, fashioned with gold.

Like the men's, the pre-Columbian woman's custume was simple, but richly adorned. Her upper garment would consist of a "huipil" or "quechquemitl."

The huipil, still worn today, varies in patterns and woven motifs from village to village. It is made from one to three lengths of cloth. Usually the different sections are joined together with colorful decorative stitches called "randa." Some hiupiles are sewn all the way up the sides, some only part way, leaving arm holes. Others are left open all the way down the sides. Necklines also will vary, some square, some circular, and some slit. Depending on its length, the huipil will be worn long as a dress, or short as a blouse with an underskirt. Some are longer than the person is tall, and then tucked into the belt to keep the wearer from tripping on the length.

The regional variations in huipils are distinctive and colorful. In Yucatan they are worn quite long and could pass for a stylish Parisian chemise. In the sierras of Oaxaca, the woman of Yalanlag make a knee-length huipil of handwoven, natural-colored cotton which is embroidered and hand-stitched around the yoke and decorated with narrow bands of colored embroidery up the front. A further touch of color is added by the two long streamers of vivid silk thread which hangs down from both sides of the garment's deep cut V-neck.

12

The quechquemitl is known nowhere else in the world exept Central America, and it is most often found in Mexico. It is an upper garment that gives the effect of a cape. Its name is derived from a combination of the word "quecntli" which means neck and "quemitl" which means garment. Usually it consists of two rectangles of material. The short side of each piece is attached to the end of the long side of the other piece, making an odd-shaped circular piece that can be slipped over the head.

Like the huipil, there is great regional variety in the way the quechquemitl is constructed and decorated. For instance, in the Lake Patzcuara region, they are made of fine black wool that is woven locally. They are embroidered with red, green and burnt orange yarns, and feature a flaring

pageboy collar and a detachable monk's cowl.

Women's skirts are as diverse as their upper garments. They range from a pleated circle 22 feet in circumference to sarang-like skirts worn by women in the tropic villages. The skirt is generally a long piece of cloth with the ends connected. The woman steps inside it and then wraps it around her waist. If the material is short, it will be fastened like a sarong. It it is very long, she will pleat it or fold it to fit her waist. (See figure for ways of assembling the skirts.) A long, woven belt is used to hold the skirt up.

The complete an outfit, Indian women wear a rebozo. It is a long, narrow shawl or stole which is chiefly used as a head covering. Made a yard wide and two and a half yards long, they also double as a means of carrying things, including babies.

Women's sandals were worn only by women of rank. The commoners went barefoot. Generally Indian women today still go barefoot, although some wear sandals woven of ixtle. 13

The Spanish conquest brought rapid and radical change in native costume. New elements were introduced, most notably tailored clothing (blouses, skirts, trousers, and gathered skirts), and wool was used to augment the native fibers. There is also thought that the rebozo was introduced in the Spanish era, although authorities do differ as to its origins.

Men's dress habits also changed dramatically under the Spanish influence. They soon adopted the Spanish customs of wearing trousers, shirts, and tailored jackets, and they happily accepted as bribes such items as leather boots, breeches, felt hats, and embroidered wool jackets.

Today fewer Mexican clothes are hand woven, embroidered, and sewn. In the large cities and towns, people dress in much the same way as people do in the United States and Canada. In the villages, however, it is still possible to find people who dress in the simple types of clothing that date back hundreds of years, and, of course, on holidays and festive occasions, people remember their heritage by dressing in the traditional styles.

WEAVING AND STITCHERY

Weaving

The life of an Indian woman prior to the conquest was occupied largely in weaving garments for herself and her family, as well as ceremonial clothes for use in the temples and for offerings. Young girls were taught the weaving skills at a very early age.

The role of weaving was given such importance in the Indian culture tha. the goddess Tlazolteotl was depicted with sprindles stuck around her head, and the goddess Xochiquetzal, the first woman, is pictured seated at a loom. In addition, her confidants and messenger chief occupations were spinning and weaving. In fact, she is the patroness of weavers and artists, and considered the originator of the art.

On the seventh day after their birth, infant girls are given a name, and as part of the ceremony, a spindle and weaving stick or shuttle were placed in her hands as a sign that she should be diligent and housewifely, a good spinner, and a better weaver. 14

A woman's status was based on how proficient she was as a weaver, and even slaves who had mastered the art were given special privileges. A good weaver would be exempt from possible sacrifice to the gods, a fate that otherwise was a possibility in a woman's life.

There were two types of looms used for weaving, depending on the region. In Central and Southern Mexico, women used the backstrap or stickloom (telar de otate), which is the simplest and oldest form of weaving. (See figure B .)

The rigid loom, which consists of a frame set on posts and put into the earth, produces a ring or tubular web or woven cloth. It was predominantly used in Northern Mexico.

There are many magical beliefs and superstitions concerning the loom. The loom, comb, and spindle are all symbolically connected with hair, which is in turn connected with rain and fertility. The similarity between hair and thread is obvious, and a comb is used on both items, furthering the analogy. According to the Indians- hair has magical properties connected with

life, weather, crops, and fertility. In Aztec sacrificial ceremonies, the victim's hair was cut, symbolizing her pending death.

Weavers often grow their own cotton, although in most cases it on only three or four plants in the vicinity of their houses. It is believed that the nearby plants will assure the rain and increased fertility.

To prepare the cotton for weaving, it is picked over to remove the seeds, dirt, and leaves. It is then fluffed out and spread over a hide or straw mat, and beaten to form an even, smooth strip which will be easy to spin.

Once the cotton is prepared, it is spun using a thin stick, varying in length from 12-18 inches and weighted at the bottom by a whorl made of wood, pottery, or clay. This end rests in a dish or gourd. The spinner draws cotton from a basket with her left hand and attaches it to the top of the spindle. She then rotates the spindle while slowly drawing out the cotton fiber until her hands are about two feet apart. This process is continued until the cotton is made into a long thread.

Once the thread is completed, it is wound onto the warping frame of the loom which consists of a series of pegs stuck in holes in a board. These pegs are arranged according to the number of crosses required in the thread when the loom is set up.

When all the warp has been wound, strings are tied to keep the odd and even numbers of the warp carefully separated until the various sticks of the loom have been inserted.

15

EMBROIDERY

Embroidery has a long history in Mexico. Popular in pre-Hispanic times, it received new impetus under Spanish rule when additional methods and styles were introduced. Today, flowers, leaves, birds, animals, stars, and geometrical designs are worked in a wide variety of stitches. Most communities have their own traditional motifs and favor certain color combinations.

Hand-spun and hand-woven textiles have a basic advantage for formalized embroidery because the warp and weft usually have the same dimensions.

Identical warp and weft made it easier to count the threads to create her pattern.

Decorated textiles fall into two categories. Either the decorative motives are worked into the material while it is still on the loom, or they are applied afterwards.

Embroidery not only decorates the fabrics, it also serves a useful function. For example, the blanket and buttonhole stitching is used to strengthen necklines and arm hold openings, and the Randa stitch is ideal for joining lengths of cloth together.

The following stitches have been used throughout Mexico's history: the Randa stitch, satin stitch, chain stitch, buttonhole, cross stitch, feather stitch, stem stitch, French knots, couching; running stitch, open and closed herringbone, Holbein, false satin stitch, flat stitch, over casting, darning, fishbone and magic braid. Additional techniques the women use are needle lace, needle weaving, which may have come from the Spanairds, and smocking.

16

SYMBOLISM OF GEOMETRIC EMBROIDERY PATTERNS

Chevrons	Symbolize war
Greco or the stepped fret	Signifies beauty, gaiety and abundance. It can also represent things such as clouds, serpents, a whirlwind, or a whirlpool.
Running triangular motif	Represents solar rays or the fire serpent.
Serpentine lines	Can represent worms, snakes, lightning, or rain.
Eight-point star	Represents both star and sun.
Arrows	Convey the prayers of individuals to the gods.
Zig zag lines	Suggest lightning and symbolize fertility.
Double cross	Represents cornfields and the four direction: north, south, east, and west. Red symbolizes the east, white the nortn, yellow the south, and black the west. Green suggests regeneration upon the earth and fertility.
Waves and water gourds	Express a wish for rain.

ANIMALS AND PLANTS REPRESENTED IN EMBROIDERY

Double-headed bird	Not derived from the Hapsburg eagle, it is associated with the god of fire.
Royal eagle	Thought to hold the world in her talons, she is also the guardian of corn.
Birds	Represent the sun god and are attributed with magic powers. It is thought that they can hear and see everything that happens on earth.
Female figures	Sympolize fertility.

Additional animals	Additional birds	Insects
monkey	peacock	butterflies
deer	vulture	spider
lizard	pelican	scorpion
crocodile	seagull	bee
rabbit	duck	
dog	bird with a heart	
jaguar	bird on top of an animal	
cat	fighting cocks	

Plant designs	Water animals
eight-petaled flowers	fish
ferns	crabs
flor de pina	
tree of life	
vines	
roses	

17

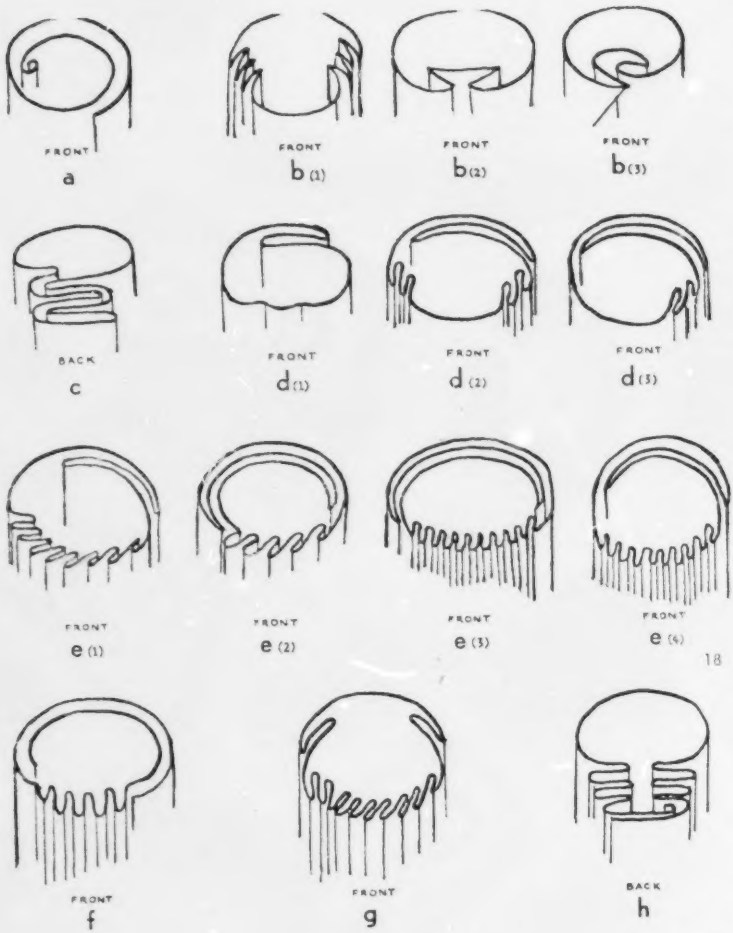


Figure 11. Various methods of assembling wrap-around skirts.

a. A skirt wrapped in sarong fashion.
b. Small tube skirts.
c. A longer tube skirt.
d. Tube skirts put on with triple thickness across the back.
e. Longer tube skirts put on with triple thickness across the back.
f. A long open-ended skirt.
g. A very-long tube skirt, not triple across the back.
h. A long open-ended skirt with all extra material arranged at the back.

18

Figure A
Methods of Assembling the Skirt.

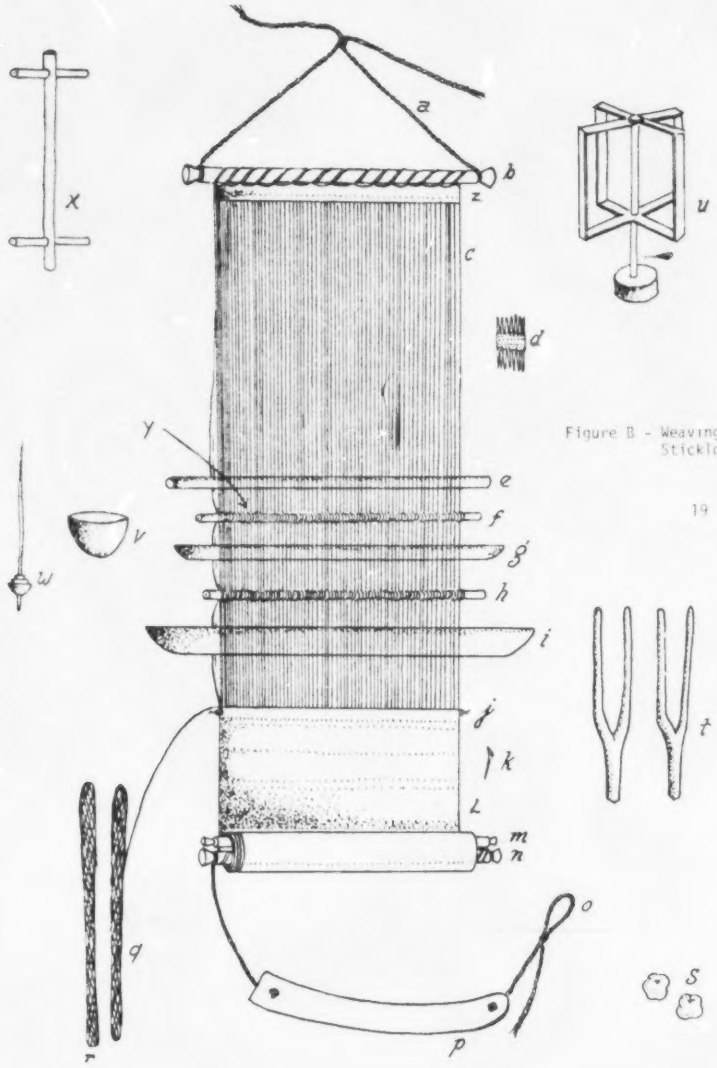


Figure 8 - Weaving Stickloom

19

20

14. An excellent heavy blanket is being woven by a Mayo Indian woman of Huatabampo, Sonora, on a loom that is not common in Mexico. This loom produces ring weaving. 1938

Figure 3. A typical backstrap loom and accessories (Zoque). From Cordry, *Costumes and Weaving of the Zoque Indians of Chiapas, Mexico*. Courtesy The Southwest Museum.

a. cord fastened to a tree or post after the heading (z) is finished
b. warp beam
c. warp threads
d. comb
e. shed roll or shed stick
f. headle or heald rods
g. small batten
h. headle or heald rods
i. large batten
j. tenter
k. thorn used to fasten tenter to web
l. woven cloth or web
m. rolling stick
n. cloth beam
o. cord fastened to backstrap
p. backstrap (*mecapal*)
q. and r. bobbins
s. raw cotton
t. cotton beaters
u. winding frame
v. gourd in which spindle is spun
w. spindle
x. warping frame
y. method of applying string to heald rod
z. heading

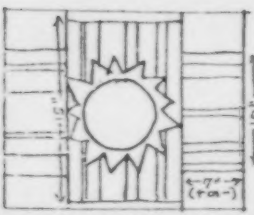
Figure C - Ringweaving

A HUIPIL ~

-MEXICAN-
(a-Guatamalan-Blouse)

A HUIPIL IS A BLOUSE WORN BY GUATAMALAN WOMEN. THE WOMEN HAND WEAVE THEM OF COTTON. IT IS A SIMPLE GARMENT OF 3 LENGTHS OF FABRIC. THEY ARE OVERWORKED WITH WOVEN STRIPS, BROCADING, APPLIQUE OR EMBROIDERY. SOMETIMES ALL OF THESE TECHNIQUES.

MATERIAL NEEDED: 1½ YARDS OF 36" FABRIC FOR THE BLOUSE BODY. ¾ YARD FABRIC FOR YOKE PANEL AND SHOULDER PANEL. USE LINEN AND EMBROIDER ... OR USE GUATAMALAN PIECES TOGETHER. OVEREMBELLISH WITH RIBBONS AND/OR EMBROIDERY. AN 8" CIRCLE OF FABRIC FOR NECK PIECE OF SUNS RAYS. FABRIC CHOICES CAN BE WOVEN PIECES, COTTONS, LINEN, SILK, ETC — BUT ALL PIECES SHOULD BE COMPATABLE.



DIRECTIONS:

21

1. PREWASH FABRICS AND TRIMS.
2. YOUR HUIPIL WILL BE CUT ACCORDING TO YOUR LARGEST MEASUREMENT - HIP OR BUST, PLUS 3-4" FOR EASE AND 4" FOR SEAMS. HALVE THAT FIGURE, THEN DIVIDE THAT SUM BY 3, MAKING THE CENTER PANEL WIDER IN PROPOTION THAN THE 2 SIDE PANELS (EX: 7"9"7")
3. CUT THE BLOUSE FABRIC INTO THE 3 PANELS AND FINISH THE SEAM EDGES. (ZIG ZAG OR OVERCAST.)
4. CUT OUT A PIECE OF FABRIC FOR THE COLLAR OF SUNS RAYS. USE A TEMPLATE TO MAKE THE NECK HOLE OF 9¼4½" AND TIPS OF SUNS RAYS. ALLOW SPACE FOR BACK SLIT OF 4" IF DESIRED. (THIS IS A LARGE NECK OPENING AND YOU MAY NOT NEED OR WANT A SLIT.)
5. DECORATE THE YOKE PANEL AND SMALLER SIDE PANELS IN EMBROIDERY DESIGNS OR FABRICS, RIBBONS OR TRIMS.
6. STITCH THE 3 BLOUSE PANELS TOGETHER. PIN AND STITCH ON THE YOKE PIECES AND COLLAR OF RAYS. OVER EMBROIDER SEAMS WITH CHAIN STITCH OR OTHER STITCH OF YOUR CHOICE.
7. OVERCAST THE NECK OPENING WITH EMBROIDERY OR BIND IT WITH TAPE.
8. ADD A BUTTON AND LOOP IF YOU MADE A SLIT.
9. STITCH TOGETHER BLOUSE SIDES. ALLOW ABOUT 10" (20" TOTAL) FOR ARMHOLES.
10. TURN UNDER AND BIND ARMHOLES.
11. HEM BLOUSE BOTTOM

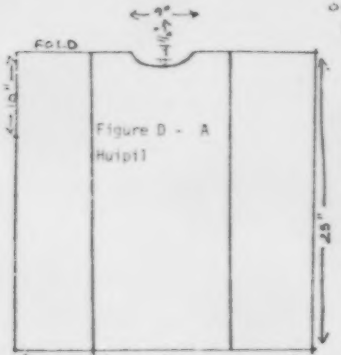


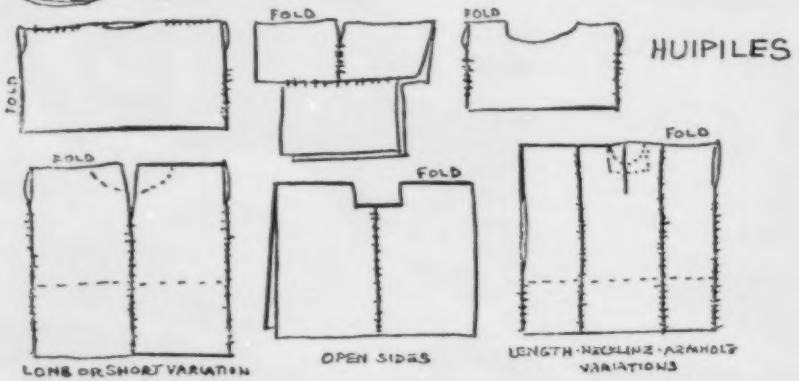
Figure D - A Huipil

WEAR YOUR HUIPIL ALONE OR WITH ANOTHER BLOUSE OR SWEATER UNDER IT. BELT OR NOT!

Happy Huipil wearing! ~

P.S. Your huipil blouse body could be made out of 1 or 2 fabric pieces instead of 3, depending on the effect you want.

HUIPILES & QUECHQUEMITLS



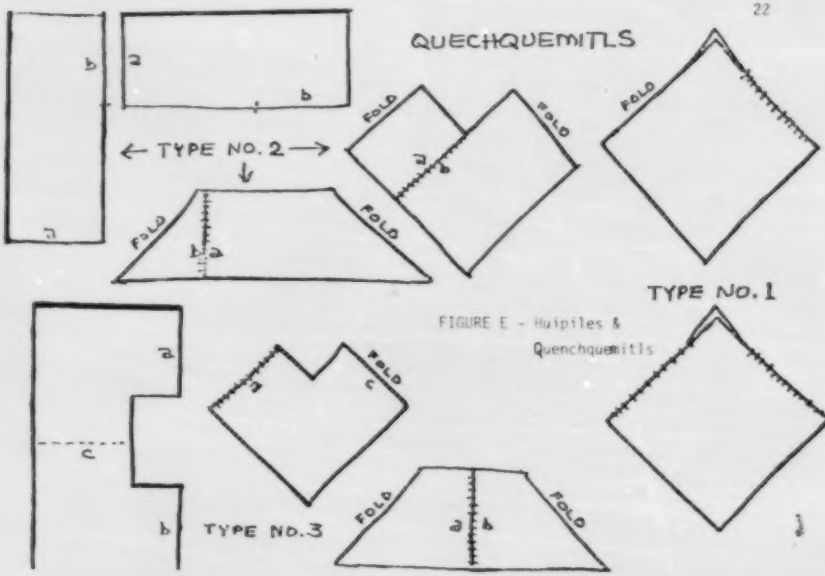


FIGURE E - Huipiles & Quenchquemitls

LANGUAGE

For more than thirty years I have been fascinated by the language and folkways of Mexico. From the time I was first able to carry on a fluent conversation in Spanish, some twenty years ago, I have enjoyed knowing Mexican people, on both sides of the border. Being exposed to the rich oral language tradition of people whose socio-economic and cultural backgrounds were often quite different from my own has added a dimension to my own life which I could not have experienced in any other way.

My appreciation for the colorful narratives of these people and my admiration for their resiliency and perseverance in the face of the survival challenges which confront minority people made me ripe for an experience such as this ethnic search.

In the process of doing the searching, I acquired several new areas of awareness. I learned about folklore scholarship and the classification 23
of motifs in the literature of world folklore. I learned that the younger generation of Mexicans living in the San Diego area is less conscious of its oral literature heritage than is the older generation. I have concluded that, although there is a considerable amount of published material which has been gathered in Texas, New Mexico and to a lesser extent, the Los Angles area, there is not published material from the greater San Diego area. Through my reading I became more aware of the difference in style between the oral narrative form and the prose from of standard literature.

Some of the folktales I read appeared in Spanish with English translation. Reading the two versions gave me an increased respect for the role of the translator in preserving the flavor of the original by adding. subtracting and embellishing, as opposed to translating literally.

In many of the transcriptions of taped narratives, especially from informants in the Los Angeles area, I encountered the same non-standard

Spanish lexical items which occasionally come up in conversations with Mexican students and friends, e.g. pos for pues (well...), dijistes for dijiste (you said), ama for mama). I learned that several items I had considered non-standard (asina for asi (thus) muncho for mucho(much, a lot), for example were actually archaic forms no longer in general use.

I enjoyed the serendipity of the ethnic search and the way in which one contact lead to another. The professionals I consulted were often enthusiastic; the Mexican informants were often surprised and pleased. The support and cooperation I encountered gave me reason to believe my research would be of benefit to others besides myself.

It is hard to stop searching. After participating in this project I have begun to consider the possiblity of pursuing a master's degree in this field.

As a teacher of ESL at the beginning level I must now attempt to apply my ethnic search findings to the teaching of oral English.

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Prose and poetry of 35 Chicano voices speaking from prisons and schools, fields and factories. Individual and collective experiences in the form of short stories, poetry, plays and selections from novels. Two narrations, written in the oral narrative style, give vivid glimpses of Chicano life: "Dona Tona of Ninteenth Street", by Luis "Luis the Foot" Gonzalez, pp. 14-17; The Bean Contest de la Escuela Zavala by Frank Sifuentes, pp. 24-25. Both in English.

Interesting poetry, often combining English and Spanish in the same poem. Of limited use for oral literature. The two short stories cited offer good values discussion topics.

Barlow, Genevieve and Stivers, William N.

Leyendas Mexicans (A Collection of Mexican Legends) National Textbook Co., Skokie, Ill., 60076. 1976

Source: Order from above address.

A textbook for intermediate level Spanish students containing 16 Mexican folktales in Spanish with a side margin vocabulary gloss and a Spanish-English vocabulary section. Many of the legends deal with specific places in Mexico: The House of Tiles in Mexico City, the volcanic mountains, Popocatepetl and Istaccihuatl, the lighthouse at Veracruz, etc... The language of the folktales is the language of textbook writers, not the language of the indigenous storyteller. 25

The sources of the legends are not documented. The credentials of the authors are not given. Stories are interesting for their content but not for the flavor of the oral tradition.

Edgewood Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas.

Tesoros de Mi Raza: Unidad A; Raza de Tesoros: Unidad B; Cuentos Para Ti: Unidad Ch. Dissemination and Assessment Center for Bilingual Education, Austin, Texas, 1976

Source: Institute for Cultural Pluralism, S.D.S.U.

A reading series (in Spanish) for upper elementary grades. Unidad A includes legends of miraculous happenings, ghosts, La Llorona, "La Muchacha del Camposanto" and tales of Indian-Mexican friendship in Texas, Unidad B contains a mixture of what seems to be true stories about historical figures, fables, legends, poems and contemporary children's fantasy. Unidad Ch contains two interesting legends: "La Leyenda del Maiz" and "La Leyenda del Chocolate y el Mexquite", pp. 39-48.

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Source: Col. Chicana, S.D.S.U.

Twenty-three stories selected and adapted in Spanish (from Cuentos Espanoles de Colorado y Nuevo Mexico by Juan Real) and retold in English. Side by side versions preserve the tradition of the storyteller in both languages. Common themes include animals, religion and human relations. Contains a story about the trickster, Pedro de Ordimalas, p. 161.

Especially useful for its dual language presentation

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Source: Institute for Cultural Pluralism., S.D.S.U.

Sections on beliefs, customs, use of medicinal herbs, historical sites in South Texas, proverbs, riddles and tales. Includes material on the famous faith healer, Don Pedro Jaramillo (1829-1907), p. 47. Descriptions of past and present practices are given in the section on customs. Useful questions for class discussion are included.

A valuable resource for a wide variety of oral genres.

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Mexican Folk Narrative from the Los Angeles Area. Doctoral dissertation, U.C.L.A. 1967

Source: Microform Room, S.D.S.U. Library

A 621 page doctoral dissertation which includes material from 27 informants in the greater Los Angeles area. Themes and folk elements of the legendary narratives: religion (the Virgin, saints), devil, return of the dead, animas, duendes, espiritus, La Llorona, buried treasure; traditional tales about animals, magic, religion, etc... Narratives appear in the original Spanish of the informants with abbreviated summanies in English. The procedure for collecting the folk materials is described. Biographies of informants, background bibliography and word list (non-standard lexical items) are included.

An extremely valuable starting point for an ethnic search on the topic of Mexican oral literature. Helpful for understanding the process of collecting narratives from informants.

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The University of Chicago Press. 1970

Source: Coleccion Chicana, S.D.S.U. Library

An outstanding collection of legendary narratives, animal tales, ordinary folktales, jokes, anecdotes and formula tales. In English. An interesting forward gives a comprehensive orientation to themes and forms of Mexican oral literature. An introduction traces the background of Mexican folklore scholarship. A section on notes to the tales documents the source and date of collection for each tale. Contains three stories about Pedro de Urdemalas, pp. 155-160.

A well-documented scholarly and highly readable work. An essential book for this topic.

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The Oasis Press, Austin, Texas. 1976

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A reading series in Spanish with non-literal English translations. Themes include amazing happenings, romantic love, devils, ghosts, creation, Texas Rangers, etc... Tales are interesting for values discussion. Comprehension questions follow each selection. A vocabulary and cognates list is included at the end. Of interest to me were: "La Llorona", p. 15, Vol. 1; "Bailando con un Fantasma", pp. 9-10, Vol. 1; "Queria Ver a Mama Tambien", p. 41, Vol 3; "Trueno Ramirez", p. 9, Vol 4.

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Crown Publishers, New York. 1947

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about Pedro de Urdemalas, La Llorona, La China Poblana and Ixtlaccihuatl and Popocateptl are of interest. Names, riddles, slang, insults and sayings are desribed.

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B. Costa-Amic, Ed. Mexico, D.F., Mexico 1973

Source: Institute for Cultural Pluralism, S.D.S.U Library

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29

In the 1950's the Mexican-American changed to "Chicano", the name for native-born descendents of Mexican parents born in the United States. Years ago there wasn't a myriad of literary productions of Chicano literature. Some say this was due to the poverty and low level of educational achievement, but others say access to publication was the problem. Today, however, the invisible minority has been "discovered" by the Anglo-Americans, partly because of their greater visibility, and, more recently, their political activities.

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Dobrin, Arnold. The New Life - La Vida Nueva. Dodd, Mead and Co., New York. 1971. A major part of this book consists of interviews to learn how Mexican Americans feel about prejudice, education, and political action. This is appropriate for junior high students or low-level reading older students to help them understand the Mexican American today,

El Grito. Sol Publications, Berkeley, California. A forum for contemporary Mexican-American thought. Contributions in written and graphic form - academic papers, book reviews, short stories, poetry, satire, drawings, photographs, and cartoons. Worth looking into for students and teachers.

Garcia, Odalmira L. Chicano Studies Curriculum Guide, Grades 9-12. National Educational Laboratory Publishers, Inc., Austin, Texas, February, 1978. This guide contains topic outlines, readings, activities, objectives and materials useful for teachers. The topics listed are history, education, the Chicano and society, literature, folklore, art, and music. This is perfect for the teacher to use for curriculum ideas and resources.

Garcia, Richard A. The Chicanos in America. Oceana Publication, Inc., Dobbs Ferry, New York. 1977. This is a chronology to provide a brief and useful introduction to an ethnic group and to stimulate further study. There is

an extensive bibliographical section for in-depth studies. The two basic themes are oppression and struggle, but included are recent trends of pride, self-determination, and mass political action. There are plenty of documents for study, but it is not interesting reading.

Grebler, Leo; Moore, Joan W, and Guzman, Ralph C. The Mexican-American People. The Free Press, New York. 1970. This is a comprehensive study of the position in urban areas of Mexican-American people covering four years. The analysis ranges over historical, cultural, religious, political perspectives, the class structure, the family, and the Mexican-American individual in a changing social world. This book is filled with interview surveys from Los Angeles and San Antonio Mexican-American households. This is an excellent resource book which is set up with easy-to-find areas and an excellent chapter on past trends and future outlook.

Hernandez, Carrol A.; Haug, Marsha J., and Wagner, Nathaniel N. Chicanos Social and Psychological Perspectives. C.V. Mosby Co., St. Louis. 1976. This is an attempt to aquaint the reader with some of the current sociological and psychological perspectives of Chicanos. It is to aid readers in questioning stereotypes and attitudes. Included are articles on family, justice, education and mental health. A good place to start in reading about Mexican Americans. It can be used as a text for advanced courses.

Journal of Reading, Vol. 24, no. 4. pp. 293-299, January, 1981. "Recent Notorious and Noteworthy Books About Mexico, Mexicans, and Mexican-Americans", Isabel Schon. The article provides the reader with a brief survey of books which "failed to capture essential aspects of Mexico and its people"; books that will not add much to the "understanding of Mexican or Mexican-American people", and some "noteworthy books that have a truer perception of and show genuine admiration for Mexican and Mexican-American people". Highly opinionated but convenient survey.

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Nava, Julian. The Mexican in American History. American Book Co., New York. 1973. This is a highly selective collection of documents to introduce readers to the Mexican American and to stumulate further investigation. This collection of readings includes studies in government, sociology, literature, and history. The sources include original documents, secondary scholarly works, literature, and the press. An excellent book for a study group since it has ideas to think about included in the text. Good readings on recent problems with great discussion areas.

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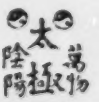

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